



Task 1 Issue Identification

The purpose of Task 1 is to understand the current role and function of US 89 and to identify issues or problems that need to be addressed through the corridor planning process. The issues were identified through a series of stakeholder interviews, a public open house, and the first joint meeting of the study task force and technical advisory committees. Comments from all of these sources have been organized by highway segment and are summarized on the attached map.

DISCLAIMER: The issues identified do not necessarily represent the views of ITD or its consultants. The issues will be considered and addressed as part of corridor planning process, but do not represent proposed policies or improvement projects. The planning process is designed to analyze and evaluate the best course of action to address these issues.

General

- US 89 serves two functions – through traffic and local access. US 89 serves as a major highway link between national parks from Mexico to Canada. This segment of US 89 provides a direct route between Salt Lake City International Airport and Jackson, Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park.
- Seasonal peak traffic volumes create unique issues related to congestion and safety as tour buses, RVs, and trucks pulling trailers and boats pull on and off the highway. Winter season traffic is expected to increase due to the increasing popularity of snowmobiles, but is not expected to be as high as the summer season.
- Future growth is expected to be primarily tourism-related and vacation home development between Fish Haven and St. Charles. Full-time, year-round residents are expected to increase.
- Improvements to US 89 in Logan Canyon are expected to lead to increased truck traffic on US 89.
- Postal drivers and school bus drivers say there are difficult and unsafe conditions all along the corridor created by high speeds, poor sight distances (vertical curves), and conflicts between faster through traffic and slow-moving vehicles pulling out onto highway.

- Traffic counts may need to be adjusted because of lower than normal traffic volumes due to a low water year in Bear Lake and road construction delays in Logan Canyon and Montpelier Canyon.
- The Logan to Jackson route is becoming popular with bicyclists, which may need wider lanes and shoulders along the entire corridor.
- Changing big game migration routes are expected to increase the number of highway crossings, especially for elk and moose.
- The corridor planning process needs to coordinate with Utah. Representatives of UDOT, Rich County, and Garden City should be included.

Montpelier

- 4th Street /Clay Street (US 89 east/US 30 intersection) – a traffic signal may be needed due to safety problems caused by westbound vehicles on US 89 not stopping at stop sign.
- 4th Street /Washington Street (US 89 west/US 30 intersection) – a traffic light will be installed this fall.
- 8th Street /Washington Street – signal detection loop on southbound approach of 8th Street in wrong location (too close to centerline) so that signal gets actuated by vehicles turning from Washington onto 8th Street. Green phase for 8th Street also needs to be lengthened by a few seconds.
- Better driver awareness of lower speed limit in Montpelier is needed. More enforcement is also needed.
- The railroad overpass is narrow and provides the only access to Montpelier from the south.

Montpelier to Ovid

- 65 mph speed limit may be too high between the Montpelier city limit and Walton Feed because of conflicts with vehicles turning in and out of driveways to local businesses and farms.
- Bear Lake Canal Bridge to Ovid – narrow roadway, no shoulders to pull-off highway in case of emergency. Wetlands on either side of corridor may limit options. If shoulders cannot be widened then may need to lower speed limit.
- Bridges are narrow and some are in need of repair or replacement.

- Old rail line from Montpelier to Paris could be converted to bike trail and provide recreational access to marsh lands.

Ovid Corner

- Safety problems are due to poor intersection configuration, which splits the Highway 36 junction into two separate intersections. A tight, narrow curve and high speed traffic also contribute to the problems.
- The intersection is confusing to drivers from outside the area, especially eastbound vehicles on Highway 36. Many eastbound drivers on Highway 36 run through stop sign. There is a need to create better driver awareness of the intersection and traffic movements.
- Additional conflicts occur between trucks accessing lumber company on the east side of US 89 (15-20 trucks/day delivering logs, 3 – 8 trucks/day delivering finished lumber products in summer).
- The configuration of the curve and location of the sawmill on the inside (east side) of the curve require the consideration of alternative routes or realignment.

Ovid to Paris

- Narrow roadway with vertical curves (rises) that limit sight distances and creates safety problems.
- Frequent conflicts between farm and non-farm vehicles in this area. Recent fatal accident involved a passenger vehicle rear-ending a farm vehicle towing irrigation pipe. Lower speed limits, wider shoulders, passing lanes or frontage roads may be needed.
- Winter weather (blowing snow, low visibility, snow drifts on road) creates hazardous driving conditions.
- 65 mph speed limit may be too high for adjacent residential and farm uses. Numerous school bus stops along this segment.

Paris

- Consider reducing existing 65 mph speed limit on north and south ends to 45 mph because of numerous driveways, residential development, children, and numerous school bus stops.
- 25 mph speed limit through center of Paris may be too slow.

Paris to St. Charles

- Generally in good condition.
- Cattle and farm equipment can create conflicts with high speed through traffic. May need wider shoulders, passing lanes, or frontage roads.
- Opportunity for a bike lane connection between Bear Lake and Paris, with possible extension along old rail line to Montpelier.

North Beach Road Intersection

- North Beach (100,000 visitors per season) and Minnetonka Cave (25,000 visitors per season) are popular attractions that create congestion due to turn movements and cross traffic. Vehicle movements between these intersections (especially RVs) coupled with short distance between intersections adds to problem.
- Poor sight distances and higher through traffic speeds (55 mph speed limit) create safety conflicts with turning vehicles.
- During summer weekends, vehicles turning left to southbound US 89 from westbound North Beach Road can back-up more than one-half mile. Turn lanes need to be added.
- Proposed food mart/rental shop on north side of North Beach Road will add to congestion.

St. Charles

- Consider reducing existing 55 mph speed limit to 45 mph on north end of town due to numerous driveways and turning vehicles at North Beach Road.
- Consider reducing existing 65 mph speed limit to 45 mph on south end of town because of numerous driveways, residential development.
- St. Charles Creek provides important spawning habitat for Bonneville Cutthroat Trout. Springs along St. Charles Creek provide important spawning habitat.

Fish Haven

- Narrow road, numerous driveways, and steep driveways with poor sight distances create conflicts.

- Expect significant future growth based on vacation home development. Only 10% of the existing platted lots are built on and the number of houses is expected to double in the next ten years, causing increased congestion. May need to consider reducing existing 65 mph speed limit north of Fish Haven Cemetery Rd. in future due to increase in traffic accessing US 89.
- Bear Lake and existing development immediately adjacent to the highway may limit improvement options.
- Need better signage to identify National Forest access routes to minimize trespassing.
- Need scenic pull-outs and lake access points per Scenic Byway Plan.
- Fish Haven Canyon Road intersection has poor sight distances due to vehicles parked on the north and south side of intersection (business access).
- Bridge over Fish Haven Creek is too narrow and does not have adequate shoulders, which forces pedestrians and bicyclists onto roadway.
- Fish Haven Creek is potential spawning habitat if barrier (flume) can be removed.
- Need to think long-term, as congestion is expected to get worse. Alternate route may be needed with the existing US 89 used as a local access road. Two options: lower route just behind houses that front existing US 89 or upper route through national forest lands that connects Beaver Creek to Green Canyon to St. Charles. Alternative routes need coordination with Utah (State DOT, Rich County, and Garden City).
- Bear Lake West (Lake West Blvd.) to Fish Haven Canyon Road segment is congested, with poor sight distances from intersections and driveways. May need turn lanes or center turn lane.
- Limited parking at the Bear Lake West beach causes overflow parking on narrow shoulders along highway. Need to reduce speed limit.
- School children wait for school bus along highway because local roads are too steep for school buses.
- School bus/snow plow truck turnaround needed at Utah state line. Vehicles must now back up onto highway to turn around (illegal maneuver for school buses).
- Opportunity to extend pedestrian/bike path from Garden City to St. Charles, with further connections around Bear Lake and to Paris.